

Host of *The Leon Show*



LEON FONTAINE

Unleashing the Miraculous
in Your Everyday World

THE SPIRIT CONTEMPORARY



Praise for
The Spirit Contemporary Life

“I am thrilled about your new book, *The Spirit Contemporary Life*. Spirit Contemporary brings together both ‘power’ and ‘practices’ to engage our constantly changing culture for the cause of Christ. It has been said, ‘We don’t get to choose the culture we are called to reach for Christ. We get to choose how we are going to engage it.’ For example, there was a time when the European and North American church played ‘home’ games. Yet today, most of the time, the church in these regions plays ‘away’ games. We can either continue down this path of misconnect or move to Spirit Contemporary and witness firsthand more coming to Christ than ever before.”

—JAMES O. DAVIS, president of Cutting Edge International and co-founder
of Billion Soul Network

“I believe *The Spirit Contemporary Life* has the potential to become the ‘next Azusa Street,’ moving us forward in the winning of our world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Just as it takes two wings for a bird to fly, it takes two wings for a church or organization to soar. Just as one wing is program, the other wing is power. When it comes to this book, one wing is ‘Spirit’ and the other is ‘Contemporary.’ When Spirit and Contemporary are synergized together, phenomenal outcomes will happen in the church. I believe this valuable resource will help the church go to higher levels of impact and influence in the years ahead.”

—DR. ELMER L. TOWNS, co-founder of Liberty University

“This timely book shines a light on a truly important concept: the gifts of the Spirit can and should be better adapted to our modern-day culture and powerfully utilized by each and every one of us in our daily lives to minister to those around us. If we dare to adopt this mind-set, we will be more effective, attractive, and culturally relevant. Leon’s dramatic personal journey as a former EMT gives testimony to the fact that a ‘Spirit Contemporary’ life is an exciting, miraculous, and fulfilling way to live.”

—MATT CROUCH, chairman of the board of Trinity Broadcasting Family
of Networks (TBN)

“Leon Fontaine has helped countless leaders in our nation and beyond. His life-giving insights have empowered them to effectively present the timeless message of God’s love and power to an ever-changing world. An exciting adventure awaits those who embrace the challenge clearly articulated in this book.”

—WAYNE ALCORN, national president of Australian Christian Churches

“I love it when someone can take the complex and make it simple. Pastor Leon Fontaine has put two words—*Spirit* and *Contemporary*—together to create a brand new paradigm of living the daily life we were meant to live.”

—SAM CHAND, leadership consultant and author of *Leadership Pain*;
president emeritus, Beulah Heights Bible College

“This is the most inspiring book on evangelism, power ministry, and the authenticity of Spirit-led life I have ever read. With numerous personal illustrations, Leon Fontaine takes us into the daily experience of living the life described in the New Testament gospels and letters. Solidly rooted in Scripture, Fontaine helps us explore what it means to live a Spirit Contemporary life personally and corporately as the body of Christ. This is not another book about relevance; this is a book inviting us to live fully in Holy Spirit’s presence.”

—DOUG BEACHAM, presiding bishop of the International Pentecostal
Holiness Church

“Powerful and revolutionary! *The Spirit Contemporary Life* stirs up the best in us and beckons us to live out our highest calling. Here we are challenged to become agents of God’s miraculous intervention as He leads us in tune with our current culture without sacrificing our spiritual moorings. Don’t pass up this book! It ignites a strategic, life-changing focus!”

—GLENN C. BURRIS Jr., president, The Foursquare Church

“*The Spirit Contemporary Life* reminds us all of our need for the Holy Spirit in our lives on a daily basis. It is a reminder we need daily and this book is the evidence.”

—DR. JAMES MERRITT, president emeritus of the Southern Baptist Convention; lead pastor of Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Georgia; host of the international broadcast *Touching Lives with James Merritt*

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LIFE



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THE SPIRIT CONTEMPORARY LIFE

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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*I dedicate this book to Sally, my loving wife,
who is my partner in ministry and life.
We both know you are the one who first challenged
our religious thinking! You worked powerfully by my
side, and together we are still walking out this new
adventure called the Spirit Contemporary Life.*

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Why Read This Book?

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is John 10:10, which I slightly paraphrase as something like this: “Jesus came so we could get a life.”

It’s time that we stop living boring, safe little Christian lives and start thinking differently about God, about life, and about ourselves.

It’s time to get real. That’s why I want you to read this book.

I’m sure you’ve noticed that the church is not a perfect institution. The church is comprised of human beings, and as long as human beings are part of the mix, there will be problems to solve every day. But the biggest problem the church faces today is the way we as Christians approach the rest of the world on God’s behalf.

Our message is fine. In fact, the message is perfect, so we don’t need to change it. The message is Jesus, and there is nothing we can do to improve on that message. But sometimes when people share that message, it does not result in others turning to Christ. In most parts of the developed world, the church is actually shrinking.

Why do so many tune out when followers of Christ try to share their faith? Why do our young people fall away from God? Why do many intelligent, well-educated people seem to run from all things Spirit filled? And why don’t we see evidence of Holy Spirit’s power in the marketplace and on the streets, just as much as we do in a church building?

Since we know that the message about Jesus is perfect and Holy Spirit’s power to influence our lives is incredible, the problem has to lie with the messengers. It has to be us.

We are the problem.

There is a simple solution. We can learn to communicate Jesus’s message in the context of our normal, everyday lives . . . and we can do it in a way that doesn’t send people running.

Can it really be that easy? We tend to assume that no one wants to hear about our relationship with Jesus. We’re afraid people will make fun of us. It’s risky. Or we

overcomplicate things and fall for the lie that it is natural for our methods of sharing our faith to result in criticism or rejection.

So many earnest believers needlessly offend and end up pushing away the very people Jesus has called us to reach. They have the best intentions, thinking that their refusal to bend tradition is how they show God their devotion, but I don't think God sees it that way.

Really, there is a simple and highly effective way to go about it. We can influence others for Jesus while we build great relationships with them. This new culture, this new way of communicating and living out our faith, is something I call the *Spirit Contemporary* life.

To sum it up, the Spirit Contemporary life means living so in tune with Holy Spirit that you are guided and empowered to help others *in natural, authentic, contemporary ways*. It's not just about putting a new face on Christianity; it's about getting back to the basics of what Christianity was always meant to be and then presenting *that reality* to the world.

This book is going to change how you see Jesus and help you discover how you can live in his power every day. You'll read stories of miracles—miracles that didn't take place in church but “out there” where life happens: at accident scenes, on streets, in schools, at workplaces, and in homes. You'll see how God's miraculous power can work through *you* in your everyday life, and it's going to radically change how you live.

You'll witness my own struggle and see how Holy Spirit led me to revolutionize how I approached my faith. Holy Spirit did a complete overhaul on my heart—and it was so simple. If he did it for me, he will do it for you too.

Spirit Contemporary is going to change everything about your life! So . . . are you ready? It's time to embark on an adventure. You can experience more of God's power, peace, and joy as you live each day. You can live in a way that causes people to be attracted to Jesus as they never were before. Not only will this concept change your life, but through it, you can help to completely transform the way the world looks at Christians.

Together, we can change what people think it means to follow Jesus. Let's get started!

Part I

THE PROBLEM

I From Altars to Ambulances

The ambulance sped along the highway, two wheels on the shoulder and two in the ditch. Traffic had already backed up for miles on the double-lane highway between the city and the beach. My nineteen-year-old mind darted in a dozen directions, trying to recall my recent training. *Assess the danger. Triage the victims. Maximize survivors.*

I had confidence in myself and my training, but my heart still raced at the thought of what lay ahead. The dispatcher had given us only vague information—a serious accident involving several victims—but news of the wreck was already all over the local radio stations. *This is a bad one*, I thought, praying I would be able to remember my training under the pressure.

As we rolled up on the scene, the driver turned off the siren, and I was struck by how eerily quiet it was—no honking horns or blaring music as you would expect in a long traffic jam. Then, in the distance I heard it, the faint sound of a child crying.

I spotted him as soon as the ambulance stopped: a little boy no more than a year old sitting in the middle of the highway, wearing only a diaper, surrounded by broken glass and debris. A crowd had gathered at the scene, but no one dared go near him, probably because they were afraid of doing more harm than good. People just

stood there staring at the toddler in his helpless state, as if they were paralyzed by the magnitude of the damage before them.

The overturned van lying to one side of the highway caught my eye next. None of the passengers had been wearing seat belts, so the impact of their flying bodies had blown out the side of the vehicle. Victims were scattered from one side of the highway to the other like rag dolls tossed by a thoughtless child. Nothing I had experienced before and none of my training could have prepared me for the sights, sounds, and smells that flooded my senses.

Not far from the toddler, a baby lay motionless, his skull noticeably fractured by the impact. After quickly covering the baby, who was beyond help, I assessed the condition of a woman whom I assumed to be the mother. She was alive, but barely. Two men lay beyond her—one dead, the other barely hanging on to life.

At the time I didn't know how profoundly this experience would affect me. Both parents died later that day. The little boy survived, but both mom and dad had been ripped from him in an instant, forever altering his world and, to a certain degree, mine. You see, nothing in my upbringing could have prepared me for the pain and heartache I began to encounter on a daily basis as an emergency responder.



Both my mom and my dad were pastors, and as far back as I can remember, they served side by side at the same church. I grew up listening to their teaching, and I have tremendous respect for both of my parents. At our church, miracles were a regular occurrence. I witnessed tumors disappearing, hearing restored, and people walking freely after years of crippling pain. As a little boy, I was always eager to go to church to see what God would do. It was exciting, powerful, and fascinating, and I'm so thankful for the way I was brought up. But now I had come face to face with the heartbreaking reality of emergency rescue.

Some nights, after a particularly traumatic shift, I could not erase the smell of blood or clear the image of a dying child from my mind. My experiences in emergency rescue raised questions that seemed to have no answers. I was confident in

Holy Spirit's miraculous power; I had witnessed it firsthand. Yet now I was faced with a hurting world, with people in desperate need, with blood, and tears, and pain, and death. And the church seemed so . . . irrelevant.

When we prayed for people in church, it was always beautiful and perfectly under control. But at accident and crime scenes, there was no organ music setting the right atmosphere and no pastor to pray. There were just the moans of the sick and screams of the dying and the heartrending sobs of mothers holding dead babies or dads searching for missing children. Day after day this was my reality, and I was completely unprepared for it.

I called out to God at this time in my life, desperately wanting him to show me how to minister to people in the “real world.”

It's not that church isn't real and beautiful. I'm a pastor as well as a pastor's kid, and I love church. We pray for the sick in our services every week. But hurting people are everywhere: at your workplace, your school, the grocery store, the gym, an accident scene. Wherever you go, God provides opportunities to demonstrate his love and power to hurting people, even if you don't always know how to respond. Church is not—it can't be—the only place God works.

In my heart I firmly believed God wanted to touch every person's life with the same miraculous power I saw regularly in church, but I was angry and frustrated because the church seemed oblivious to the needs outside its four walls. And I felt powerless to do anything about it. It was great that we all were praying in church, but we did it with worship music in the background, at the altar, accompanied by language and behavior unfamiliar to the outside world. That approach would have

I wanted God's power not only in the front of the church but also in the back of my ambulance.

stuck out like a sore thumb outside the church, not to mention that if I prayed for people that way in the back of an ambulance, I'd have been fired. But I needed to do something! For the first time in my life I was witnessing the painful reality that many people who don't know Jesus live with every day—violence, tragedies, suicides, sexual and domestic abuse—and I had no way to introduce them to the person

they so desperately needed to meet. I knew how to be a Christian in church, where everyone spoke the same language and acted the same way, but I had no idea how to bring that faith into my everyday world.

The reality was I wanted God's power not only in the front of the church but also in the back of my ambulance. My heart was breaking. I wanted him to touch people in hospitals, on streets, and in ditches at three o'clock in the morning when I was ankle deep in water and blood trying to save lives. And I wanted to find a way to work in the power of Holy Spirit that wouldn't turn people off. I had seen entirely too much of that in my young life, and I was convinced we could be more like Jesus, who somehow performed incredible miracles *and* attracted people who were far from God. So at that time in my life, when I was balancing the brutal reality of first-response medical aid and faith in a miracle-working God, I asked him to show me how to pray in a way that got results.

I didn't know it then, but what I was longing for was a Spirit Contemporary approach to the Spirit-filled life.

Maybe you can relate. You may have wanted to share your faith, or wanted to reach out to people in need, or wanted to see miracles happen in the lives of others but were afraid you'd be pegged as a weirdo or extremist. Or maybe you do share your faith and invite people to church consistently but can't understand why they don't respond positively more often than they do.

If this sounds familiar, hang on, because you're in for the ride of your life. I invite you to join me in the Spirit Contemporary life.



Before we get started . . . one more important point!

You may have noticed I refer to God's Spirit as Holy Spirit and not as *the* Holy Spirit. I do this because Holy Spirit is a person, not some impersonal force. In John 14:16, Jesus referred to Holy Spirit as "another Comforter" (KJV). The word *another* tells us that Holy Spirit functions exactly the same way Jesus did. Jesus didn't leave us with someone less wonderful than he is. He left us with someone exactly like him.

When you think of Holy Spirit, don't think of a blob or a vapor. Think of a

person. You would never say *the* Jesus or *the* Leon because Jesus and Leon are names. They represent people, not functions. Referring to Holy Spirit without the definite article before his name is one way to remind yourself that he is a person, and he's someone who wants to have a phenomenal, rock-your-world-completely kind of relationship with you.



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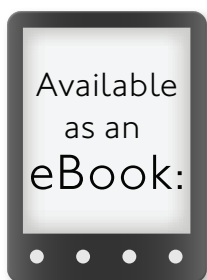
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